DeepL
Subscribe to DeepL Pro to translate larger documents.
Visit www.DeepL.com/pro for more information.

“The Christian Spiritual Panacea”
Revealing the Foundational Texts Preceding the Bible

By Josefa Nuria Peña Alcántara.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Contents
Part I: Codices and Papyri	Detailed information about each manuscript.
1.1 The Vatican Codex (B)	Description, date, and textual significance.
1.2 The Codex Sinaiticus	Description, date, and textual significance.
1.3 The Leningrad Codex (L) and the Dead Sea Scrolls	Description, date, and textual significance.
1.4 The Papyri (P52, Chester Beatty, Bodmer, Alexandrian Codex (A), Rescripted Refrain) Part II: Translation Methodology and Analysis	Description, date, and textual meaning. Explanation of the semantic, grammatical, and textual criticism approaches. Comparative analysis.
Final conclusions	Final reflections

INTRODUCTION

"And the truth will set you free." These words, attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John (John 8:32), are the guiding light for this monumental project. For centuries, access to the primary sources of early Christianity has been reserved for a select group of scholars with specialized training in ancient languages. The average reader has depended on denominational translations and interpretations, which inevitably introduce particular biases or nuances.

This work aims to dismantle those barriers. It is an open invitation to anyone on the planet with a genuine spiritual interest to travel back in time and directly examine the oldest and most complete documents we possess: the Vatican Codex, the Sinaiticus, the Leningrad Codex, and the oldest papyri, such as P52.

Here you will find no preconceived theological interpretation. Instead, we offer transparency: the transcription of the original text in its languages (Koine Greek and Biblical Hebrew), a rigorous semantic and grammatical analysis, and a comparative translation into Spanish and English. My goal is to provide the tools for you, the reader, to interact with the fundamental text and discern the truth for yourself, before any ecclesiastical dogma. The truth is in the sources; my job is simply to illuminate them and make them available to you.

The history of Christianity is, tragically, marked by disunity and, at times, conflict between those who claim to possess the "truth." These dogmatic disagreements, often born of divergent interpretations of modern scripture, sow discord and resentment, preventing the unity that the original message sought to achieve. The unshakeable belief that "my Bible" or "my interpretation" is the only valid one has fragmented the faith.

This project is my humble proposal for a "Christian spiritual panacea" as an antidote to that division. I offer a common point of reference, neutral ground: the original texts of the oldest codices and papyri. By revealing these

manuscripts, my goal is simple: to transcend denominational barriers and dogmatic conflicts, and allow the source itself to speak. There is only one truth, one underlying text for all modern Bibles. By focusing on that shared textual basis, we seek to foster unity through transparency and evidence, allowing each reader to discern the truth for themselves, before any of the aforementioned ecclesiastical dogma.

To achieve this transparency, I proceed as follows: I rely on digital academic transcriptions of the oldest publicly available codices and papyri. These transcriptions simply decode ancient writing (paleography) into modern letters, a largely objective process. However, my work is original: I do the translation into Spanish and English, along with the semantic and grammatical analysis, from scratch, without accepting previous translations by scholars.

I use lexicons (specialized dictionaries) that provide me with the full range of meanings for each word in its historical context. But it is my rigorous and objective analysis that determines the exact nuance to be used in my translation. In addition, I present all significant textual variants from the manuscripts, allowing the reader to see the differences for themselves. The final "filter" of this work is human discernment with the help of the Holy Spirit and objectivity based on shared evidence, not adherence to pre-existing dogma. I cordially invite you on this journey of discovery and to be part of the search for the truth that will set you free.

As an instance, this book is a map, not the destination. It is an invitation to a journey, not toward a new ecclesiastical institution, but toward the very center of faith. By interacting directly with the primary sources, I aspire to facilitate a process of personal discovery and integration, a path toward a more complete and undivided understanding of the spiritual truth that resides deep within every sincere seeker. The goal is not extreme uniformity, but internal wholeness, free from the divisions that fragment the soul.

"But I pray not only for these, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me."

- John 17:20-21.

"For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

-1 Corinthians 12:1.

Josefa Nuria Peña Alcántara,

Part I: The Codices and Papyri

1.1. The Vatican Codex B). (Codex Vaticanus, B):

The Vatican Codex is universally recognized as one of the most valuable and ancient biblical manuscripts in existence. It is a fundamental pillar of textual criticism, the study that seeks to reconstruct the original texts of the Bible from available copies.

The Vatican Codex is estimated to have been produced in the early to mid-4th century AD , making it a close contemporary of the Codex Sinaiticus. It has resided in the Vatican Apostolic Library in Rome since at least the 15th century, where it remains one of its most closely guarded treasures. Its academic designation is simply the letter "B."

Contents and Characteristics:

The codex is written in Koine Greek, the lingua franca of the eastern Mediterranean in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Unlike the Codex Sinaiticus, which uses four columns per page, the Vatican Codex has three columns of text per page.

Material: It is composed of thin, fine sheets of vellum (parchment of the highest quality), organized in a codex format, or bound book.

Textual Content: Originally contained the entire Greek Bible (the Septuagint for the Old Testament and the New Testament). However, over the centuries it has suffered losses: several sections of the Old Testament (including most of Genesis and parts of the Psalms) and the end of the New Testament (including the last pastoral epistles, Philemon, and the book of Revelation) are missing.

Style: Like other early manuscripts, the text is written in scriptio continua (without spaces between words) using uncial script (capital letters).

Importance for Textual Criticism and "Truth":

Textual Excellence: The Vatican Codex is often considered by scholars to possess one of the purest and least altered textual qualities of ancient Greek manuscripts. It is a key witness to the Alexandrian type of text, a textual tradition that experts consider very close to the autographs (the original writings) of the biblical authors.

Basis for Translations: Together with the Sinaiticus, it is the primary basis for most modern critical editions of the Greek New Testament and, therefore, for almost all modern translations of the Bible into languages such as Spanish, English, and others.

Comparison and Verification: Its existence allows scholars to compare its readings with those of the Codex Sinaiticus and older papyri, helping scholars discern which readings are most likely original and which are variations that arose in different copying traditions.

The Vatican Codex is an irreplaceable piece of the historical and textual puzzle that confirms the diligence with which the biblical text has been preserved over the millennia.

1.2. The Codex Sinaiticus:

Considered the oldest complete Bible in existence. The digitization project is excellent.

The Codex Sinaiticus, a manuscript of the Christian Bible written in the mid-4th century, contains the oldest complete copy of the Christian New Testament. The manuscript text is in Greek. The New Testament appears in the original vernacular (Koine) and the Old Testament in the version known as the Septuagint, adopted by the early Greek-speaking Christians. In the Codex, the text of both the Septuagint and the New Testament has been profusely annotated by a series of early proofreaders.

The importance of the Codex Sinaiticus for reconstructing the original text of the Christian Bible, the history of the Bible, and the history of Western literature is immense.

1.3 The Leningrad Codex (L) and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Leningrad Codex is the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). The Dead Sea Scrolls are even older fragments that confirm the accuracy of the text.

Description and Date: The Leningrad Codex is the oldest known complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh or Old Testament). It dates from approximately 1008 AD and was produced in Cairo, Egypt. It is currently housed in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg (hence its name, which was retained to avoid confusion despite the city's name change).

Content and Characteristics: Written in Hebrew on parchment, this codex (book format, unlike synagogue scrolls) contains the complete Masoretic Text. The Masoretes were a group of Jewish scribes who standardized the consonantal text and added a system of dots and dashes (vowel punctuation and accents) to ensure the correct pronunciation and transmission of the sacred text.

Importance: It is the base text used for most modern printed editions of the Hebrew Old Testament (such as the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia). Its importance lies in its integrity and fidelity to the Masoretic tradition established centuries after the original texts.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran Manuscripts):

Description and Date: These are a collection of approximately 900 manuscripts and thousands of fragments discovered in the caves of Qumran, near the Dead Sea, between 1947 and 1956. They are about 2,000 years old, dating from the third century BC to the year 70 AD, making them significantly older than the Leningrad Codex.

Content and Characteristics: Most are written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, on papyrus and parchment. They include copies, often fragmentary, of almost all the books of the Old Testament (except Esther), as well as apocryphal and sectarian texts, hymns, and legal documents from a Jewish community, possibly the Essenes.

Importance: The Dead Sea Scrolls revolutionized biblical studies by providing direct insight into Jewish textual traditions prior to the standardization of the Masoretic Text.

The comparison of both manuscripts is fundamental to textual criticism:

Textual Reliability: Despite the thousand-year difference between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Leningrad Codex, comparison shows remarkable consistency. Textual variations exist (differences in spelling, word choice), but none of these differences alter the essence of the central biblical message.

The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that, in ancient times, there was greater diversity in the biblical texts in circulation (some closer to the Greek Septuagint, others to the later Masoretic Text).

Confirmation of Transmission: The Leningrad Codex represents the culmination of a meticulous process of textual preservation by the Masoretes, whose accuracy is largely confirmed when compared with manuscripts that are a thousand years older.

Both documents are pillars that, through the methodology of textual criticism, allow scholars to trace the biblical text through time and get closer to the original writings, supporting the "historical truth" of its transmission.

13 sites

The Dead Sea Scrolls | Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Translated — The Dead Sea Scrolls are ancient manuscripts that were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves near Khir...

מוזיאון ישראל.

1.4. The Papyri P52, Chester Beatty, Bodmer, Codex Alexandrinus, Refrain Rescript:

While the large codices (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus) date from the fourth century AD, the papyri represent the oldest fragments and books of the Bible that we possess, bridging the temporal gap between the original writings of the apostles and our existing copies. They are crucial because they take us back to the second century and even the late first century AD.

Papyrus P52 (Rylands Fragment of John):

Description and Date: P52 is the oldest and most indisputable papyrus fragment of the New Testament that has been identified. It measures only about 9 by 6 centimeters and contains a few lines from the Gospel of John, chapter 18 (verses 31-33 on the front, 37-38 on the back). Its dating is the key point: it is estimated to be between 117 and 138 AD, just a few decades after the Evangelist John wrote his gospel.

Significance: Its existence proves that copies of the Gospel of John were widely circulated from Egypt in the early second century. It is vital physical evidence that refutes theories that the Gospel of John was written much later or in a distant location.

The Chester Beatty Papyri:

Description and Date: This collection, purchased by industrialist Sir Alfred Chester Beatty in the early 20th century, includes several important biblical manuscripts dating from the 3rd century AD.

Key Content: The most famous are:

P45 (Gospels and Acts): Fragments of the four Gospels and the book of Acts, showing how these books were grouped together early on.

P46 (Paul's Epistles): Contains most of Paul's epistles. It is the oldest manuscript we have from Paul's collection, dating from around 200 AD.

P47 (Revelation): Fragments from the book of Revelation.

Importance: They show that as early as the third century AD, substantial collections of biblical texts were circulating in papyrus codex format, not just individual scrolls.

The Bodmer Papyri:

Description and Date: The Bodmer Collection is another vital series of about 22 papyri discovered in Egypt in the 1950s, dated mainly between the third and fourth centuries AD.

The Alexandrian Papyri:

The

The Alexandrian Codex (catalogued as A or 02; British Library, Royal MS 1. D. V-VIII) is one of the most important and complete Greek biblical manuscripts of antiquity, crucial for textual criticism and understanding the development of the biblical canon.

Key Features of the Codex Alexandrinus

Date and Material: It dates from approximately the 5th century AD. It is written on parchment (not papyrus, as it is sometimes mistakenly called), using continuous Greek uncial (capital) letters.

Contents: It contains almost the entire Septuagint (LXX) (the Greek Old Testament), including several deuterocanonical (apocryphal) books such as 3

and 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151, and almost the entire New Testament. Notable ecclesiastically, it also includes two additional epistles: the First and Second Epistles of Clement.

Textual Type: It is a primary witness of the Alexandrian (or neutral) text type, considered by many modern scholars to be one of the texts closest to the lost "original" due to its more concise style of transmission and less propensity for interpretive additions.

Importance: Along with the Codex Sinaiticus (א) and the Codex Vaticanus (B), it is one of the "Four Great Uncial Codices" and serves as a fundamental basis for modern translations of the Bible.

Key Content:

P66 (Gospel of John): An almost complete manuscript of John, dated around 200 CE. It is fundamental to textual criticism.

P75 (Luke and John): Perhaps the most important papyrus in the collection, dated to the early third century AD. It exhibits extremely high textual quality, very close to the text of the Vatican and Sinaiticus codices, demonstrating a very stable line of textual transmission.

Importance: The Bodmer papyri, especially P75, confirmed the purity and antiquity of the textual tradition that would later become the standard text used by the great codices of the fourth century.

Conclusion:

These papyri, although fragmentary, are "time capsules" that allow us to see the most primitive form of the biblical text. Their meticulous analysis in textual criticism provides irrefutable evidence that the New Testament texts we read today are faithful to those that circulated in the early Church, contributing to the search for the "truth that sets us free."

Part II: Methodology of Translation and Analysis.

2.1. The Vatican Codex B). (Codex Vaticanus, B).

The codex originally contained a nearly complete copy of the Greek Old Testament (known as the Septuagint/LXX), missing only 1-4 Maccabees and the Prayer of Manasseh.

The 20 original leaves containing Genesis 1:1–46:28a (31 leaves) and Psalm 105:27–137:6b have been lost. These were replaced by pages transcribed by a later hand in the 15th century.

2 Kings 2:5–7, 10–13 were also lost due to a tear in one of the pages.

The order of the Old Testament books in the codex is as follows:

Genesis to 2 Chronicles as usual; 1 Esdras; 2 Esdras (Ezra–Nehemiah);
); the Psalms; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Song of Songs; Job; Wisdom; Ecclesiasticus; Esther; Judith; Tobit; the minor prophets from Hosea to Malachi (but in the order: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi); Isaiah; Jeremiah; Baruch; Lamentations and the Epistle of Jeremiah; Ezekiel and Daniel. This order differs from that followed in the Codex Alexandrinus.

The existing portion of the New Testament contains the Gospels:

The Acts, the general epistles, the Pauline epistles, and the Epistle to the Hebrews (up to Hebrews 9:14, καθα[ριει); 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Revelation are missing. The missing part of Hebrews and Revelation was supplemented with a 15th-century minuscule (folios 760-768) and is cataloged separately as minuscule 1957. It is possible that some apocryphal books of the New Testament were included at the end (as in the Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus codices). It is also possible that Revelation was not included.

Verses not included:

Several passages are missing from the New Testament text:

- Matthew 12:47
- Matthew 16:2b–3
- Matthew 17:21
- Matthew 18:11
- Matthew 23:14
- Mark 7:16
- Mark 9:44
- Mark 9:46
- Mark 11:26
- Mark 15:28

The end of Mark in the Vatican contains an empty column after verse 1c:8, possibly suggesting that the scribe was aware of the absence of the ending. It is the only empty column in the New Testament in the Codex.

- Mark 16:9–20 — The book of Mark ends with verse 16:8.
- Luke 17:36
- Luke 22:43–44 (Christ's agony in Gethsemane)
- John 5:4.
- John 7:53-8:11 (Pericope Adulterae).
- Acts 8:37.
- Acts 15:34.
- Acts 24:7.
- Acts 28:29.
- Romans 16:24.
- 1 Peter 5:3.

Phrases that do not appear in the Vatican but do appear in later manuscripts include:

- Matthew 5:44

εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμᾶς, καλῶς ποιεῖτε τοῖς μισοῦσιν ὑμᾶς (*bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you*)

omit - **B ℵ** ƒ[1] k sy[s,c] sa bo[pt] mae

incl. - Majority of manuscripts.

- Matthew 10:37

And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

- Matthew 15:6

ἢ τὴν μητέρα (αὐτοῦ) (*or (his)* mother).

- Matthew 20:23

καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθήσεσθε (*and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized*)

- Mark 10:7

καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ (*and cleave* to his wife).

- Mark 10:19

μη αποστερησης

- Luke 9:55–56

And he *said*, "*You do not know what spirit you are of*; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*."

for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives
but to save them).

- Luke 11:4
-

αλλα ρυσαι ημας απο του πονηρου (*but deliver us* from evil).

- Luke 23:34

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἔλεγεν· Πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς· οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν (*And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

Gospel of Matthew 27:49

ἄλλος δὲ λαβὼν λόγχην ἔνυξεν αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευράν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα (*and another took a spear and pierced his side, and water and blood came out* - see John 19:34).

Some notable readings

Judges 18:30

υἱὸς Μανασση (*son of Manasseh*) - **B**
υἱοῦ Μωυσῆ (*son of Moses*).

Matthew 5:22

εικη (*without cause*)

Matthew 17:23

τη τριημερα (*the third day*) - **B** (singular reading)
τη τριτη ημερα (*the third day*).

Matthew 21:31

ὁ ὕστερος (*the last*) - **B** (singular reading)
ὁ ἔσχατος (*the last*) .

ὁ πρῶτος (*the first*).

Matthew 23:38

ερημος (*desert*)

Luke 4:17

καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ βιβλίον (*and opened the book*).

καὶ ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον (*and unrolled the book*).

Luke 6:2

οὐκ ἔξεστιν (*not lawful*) - Codex Nitriensis.

οὐκ ἔξεστιν ποιεῖν (*it is not lawful to do so*).

Luke 10:42

ολιγων δε χρεια εστιν η ενος (*few things are necessary, or only one*) -
(singular reading; but see below)
ολιγων δε εστιν χρεια η ενος (*few things are necessary, or only one*) - $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$
One thing is necessary.

John 12:28

δοξασον μου το ονομα (*glorify my name*) - **B** (singular reading)
δοξασον σου τον υιον (*glorify your son*) -
δοξασον σου το ονομα (*glorify Your name*).

John 16:27

πατρος (*the Father*).

θεου (*God*).

Acts 27:16

Caudas (name of the island). Clauda (name of the island). Claudine (name of the island).

Ephesians 2:1

αμαρτιαις (*sins*) - **B** (singular reading)
επιθυμιαις (*desires*).

Hebrews 1:3

φανερων (*revealer*) - **B** (singular reading).
φερων (*holding*).

Analysis:

The main difference between the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) and current versions of the Bible (which are generally based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text) lies in the canon (the books included), textual variants, and the order of the books.

Below is an analysis of the key differences:

1. Additional Books (Canon):

The most obvious difference is the number of books accepted into the canon.

Septuagint: Includes several additional books and sections, known to Catholics and Orthodox Christians as deuterocanonical (and to Protestants as apocryphal). These include Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), and Baruch, as well as additions to Esther and Daniel.

Current Bibles (Protestant): Follow the Jewish canon (the Masoretic Text), which excludes these additional books, resulting in 39 books in the Old Testament.

Current Bibles (Catholic/Orthodox): These use a canon closer to that of the Septuagint and include the deuterocanonical books, for a total of 46 books in the Old Testament.

2. Textual Variants:

There are numerous subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) differences in the wording of the texts that both versions share:

Length of Texts: In some books, such as Jeremiah and Job, the Septuagint version is significantly shorter than the Hebrew version (Masoretic Text).

Different Original Readings: It is believed that the Septuagint often reflects an older Hebrew textual form than the one that was eventually standardized in the Masoretic Text centuries later. Findings from the Dead Sea Scrolls have sometimes supported readings found in the Septuagint that differ from the Masoretic Text, suggesting that multiple Hebrew textual traditions existed in antiquity.

Translation and Interpretation: Being a translation into Greek, the Septuagint sometimes interprets the Hebrew text differently from the Masoretic Text, which is the original Hebrew text with vowelization and accent marks added by the Masoretes (Jewish scholars) much later (between the 6th and 10th centuries CE).

Quotations in the New Testament: The authors of the New Testament frequently quote from the Septuagint text, indicating its widespread use and importance in early Christianity.

3. Order of the Books:

Septuagint (and Christian Bibles): Organizes the books by thematic categories (Law, History, Poetry, and Prophets), which facilitates a chronological or fluid reading of the story.

Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible): Follows a different order, structured in three sections: the Torah (Law), the Nevi'im (Prophets), and the Ketuvim (Writings).

In short, the Septuagint is not simply a different translation, but a testimony to a distinct textual and canonical tradition that has profoundly influenced the development of Christian Bibles, especially Catholic and Orthodox ones.

4. Translation versus Interpretation:

Original Text and Translation: Most reputable modern Bibles are largely consistent with the available original texts (Masoretic Text for the Old Testament, and critical Greek texts for the New Testament). Differences between translations are usually minor and relate to linguistic nuances or obscure passages, rarely affecting core doctrines.

Denominational Interpretation: Differences arise from how different denominations interpret those texts. Each ecclesiastical group applies a particular hermeneutical method, leading to different doctrines and practices.

4.1 Hermeneutics as a Filter:

Denominations approach the text with different interpretive lenses:

Literal vs. Symbolic/Allegorical Interpretation: Some churches interpret most passages literally, while others see symbolism or allegory in many narratives.

Ecclesiastical Tradition: The Catholic and Orthodox Churches, for example, give significant weight to Tradition and the Magisterium (the Church's teaching authority) as guides for interpreting Scripture, in addition to the text itself. Protestant denominations, in general, emphasize "Sola Scriptura" (Scripture as the sole source of authority), although they still develop their own traditions of interpretation.

Cultural and Historical Context: The emphasis on the cultural and historical context of the biblical authors varies, which can lead to different applications of the commandments or narratives.

4.2 The Canon and the Authority of Tradition:

Original/Early Text: Early writings circulated in various collections (as seen with the Septuagint). Early Christianity valued these texts, but the canon (authoritative list of books) was not immediately closed universally. There was no formalized concept of written "Tradition" or an ecclesiastical "Magisterium" with the same authority as Scripture.

Ecclesiastical Ideas:

Catholicism/Orthodoxy: Maintains that Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium have authority alongside Scripture to interpret the faith. They accept deuterocanonical books as fully inspired.

Protestantism: Emphasizes Sola Scriptura, the idea that the Bible is the only infallible source of authority for faith and practice, rejecting the binding authority of oral tradition or councils if they contradict Scripture. They exclude the deuterocanonical books from the main canon.

4.2.1 Salvation and the Role of Works:

Original Text (New Testament): Key passages in Romans and Ephesians emphasize salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, separate from the works of the law. However, passages such as James speak of faith demonstrated by works.

Ecclesiastical Ideas:

Protestantism: Defines justification (being declared righteous by God) as an instantaneous act that occurs solely by faith (sola fide), with works being the result of salvation, not a requirement.

Catholicism: Teaches that living faith requires works of charity for ongoing justification and sanctification; faith without works is dead and cannot save.

4.1.3 The Sacraments and the Eucharist:

Original Text: The Gospels recount the Last Supper where Jesus says, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." The text is descriptive.

Ecclesiastical Ideas:

Catholicism/Orthodoxy: They believe in transubstantiation or metousiosis; the belief that the bread and wine literally become the actual body and blood of Christ.

Protestantism (Various): They range from the spiritual presence of Christ (Reformation, Lutherans) to a symbolic or memorial view of the Lord's Supper (Baptists, Zwinglians), where there is no literal change of substance.

4.1.4 Church Leadership and Structure:

Original Text:

(New Testament): Describes bishops, deacons, and elders (presbyters) in a context of local leadership. Peter is a prominent figure, but there is no clear and fully developed global papal hierarchical structure as it is known today.

Ecclesiastical Ideas:

Catholicism: Upholds the doctrine of apostolic succession, whereby modern bishops, and specifically the Pope as successor to Peter, have direct and divinely ordained authority over the entire global Church.

Protestantism: Rejects papal authority and mandatory apostolic succession, adopting more congregationalist, Presbyterian, or Episcopal structures, which vary in their hierarchy but generally place less emphasis on a single centralized authority.

5. Key Differences: Original Text (LXX vs. MT):

Here we highlight what is different in the original text of the Septuagint compared to the Masoretic Text, which is the basis for most modern Protestant Bibles:

Expanded Canon: The LXX includes additional (deuterocanonical) books and sections that the MT does not have, such as Tobit and 1 and 2 Maccabees.

Textual Variants: There are thousands of minor textual differences. In books such as Jeremiah, the LXX version is significantly shorter and organized differently from the MT version.

Messianic Readings: At times, the LXX uses more explicit language than the New Testament authors used to refer to Jesus. For example, in Isaiah 7:14, the LXX uses the Greek word parthenos (virgin) to translate the Hebrew word almah (which can mean "maiden" or "virgin"), which is crucial to the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth.

Narrative Tone: The LXX sometimes has a more "open" or interpretive narrator in contrast to the more concise style of the MT.

5.1 Discrepancies with Ecclesiastical Interpretations:

Ecclesiastical ideas differ from the original text (both LXX and MT) mainly in how they interpret and systematize theology:

5.1.2 Nature of Authority:

Original Text: Emphasizes the authority of Scripture itself and apostolic teaching.

Ecclesiastical: Catholicism and Orthodoxy add Sacred Tradition and Magisterium as sources of authority alongside Scripture. Protestantism adopts Sola Scriptura, although its own interpretive traditions often guide understanding of the text.

5.1.3 Doctrine of Salvation:

Original Text: Speaks of both faith (Romans, Ephesians) and works (James). The text emphasizes God's grace, but the exact relationship between faith and works is nuanced.

Ecclesiastical:

Protestantism: Emphasizes justification by faith alone (sola fide), viewing works as evidence, not as a requirement for salvation.

Catholicism: Considers works of charity necessary for ongoing justification and final salvation.

5.1.14 Eucharist (Lord's Supper):

Original Text: Contains the words of Jesus, "This is my body." The exact nature of the bread and wine is not theorized in philosophical detail.

Ecclesiastical: They developed specific dogmas: Catholic transubstantiation (literal change of substance) and various Protestant interpretations (spiritual presence, symbolism/memorial).

5.1.5 Ecclesiastical Structure:

Original Text: Mentions local bishops and deacons. The primacy of Peter is suggested, but there is no clear global papal system.

Ecclesiastical: Developed complex hierarchies, such as the authority of the Pope in Catholicism or the Congregationalist and Presbyterian structures in Protestantism, which go beyond the initial descriptions in the New Testament.

2.2. Codex Sinaiticus:

The Codex Sinaiticus (א or ℵ), a Greek manuscript from the 4th century AD, is one of the oldest and most complete Christian biblical manuscripts. Its "original" differs from modern ecclesiastical Bibles not in the core message, but in the configuration of the
text (textual variants) and the theological interpretation that denominations have developed over the centuries.

Comprehensive Analysis of the Differences

The differences can be categorized into three main areas: content and canon, textual variations, and interpretive/theological divergences.

1. Content and Canon:

The Codex Sinaiticus offers a snapshot of the biblical canon at a formative stage of early Christianity.

Unique Inclusions: It contains the entire New Testament and much of the Old Testament (in the Greek version of the Septuagint), as well as two extra books in the New Testament that are not in modern Bibles: the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas.

Absences in the OT: Although it follows the Septuagint, some deuterocanonical books that are in modern Catholic Bibles (such as 1 and 2 Maccabees) are missing, showing that even within the Septuagint tradition, the canon was not identical everywhere at that time.

Order of Books: The order of the books differs from the current standard. For example, the Acts of the Apostles are located between Philemon and James in the Sinaiticus, while in modern Bibles they are after the Gospels.

2. Textual Variants:

The Codex Sinaiticus is a primary source for textual criticism, the study of variations in ancient manuscripts. It contains thousands of differences, mostly minor, compared to the Textus Receptus (Received Text), which was the basis for many early Protestant translations (such as the King James Version or the original Reina Valera).

Notable Omissions: The Sinaiticus omits passages known to be included in most modern Bibles, which are based on later (Byzantine) manuscripts:

Mark 16:9-20: The extended final section of the Gospel of Mark does not appear in the Sinaiticus or the Vaticanus, two of the oldest manuscripts. Modern Bibles usually include it with a footnote.

John 7:53–8:11: The story of the adulterous woman is also not found in the Sinaiticus.

Additions by Scribes: The codex contains numerous corrections made by various scribes over the centuries (between the fourth and eighth centuries), demonstrating that the text was in flux and constantly being revised even in ancient times. This contrasts with the ecclesiastical idea, especially in some fundamentalist branches, of a perfectly preserved biblical text unchanged over time.

Minor Differences: Most variations are spelling or grammatical, but occasionally they slightly impact the theological meaning of a phrase.

3. Ecclesiastical Interpretive Discrepancies:

Ecclesiastical ideas do not arise directly from textual variations in the Sinaiticus, but from centuries of interpretation (hermeneutics) and doctrinal development.

Dogmatic Development: The Sinaiticus is a text; the churches (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) are institutions that have developed complex theological systems (dogmas, sacraments, hierarchies) that go far beyond the letter of the 4th-century manuscript. The doctrine of transubstantiation, for example, is not explicitly found in the text, but is a later theological development.

Use of Textual Criticism: Liberal Protestant churches and modern scholarship use manuscripts such as the Sinaiticus to approximate the oldest "original," which sometimes causes them to differ from traditions based on the Textus Receptus.

Conclusions:

Value of Sinaiticus: The Codex Sinaiticus is a fundamental tool for biblical scholars, providing a crucial window into the biblical text of the fourth century, prior to the standardization that occurred in later centuries.

No Central Doctrinal Differences: Despite thousands of textual variants and notable omissions, no central doctrine of Christianity is compromised or denied by the Codex Sinaiticus. The overall message of the Christian faith is consistent with modern Bibles.

Interpretation is the Key to Discrepancy: The differences between the "original" (including the Sinaiticus) and the "ecclesiastical" versions lie more in the interpretive frameworks and the authority that different denominations give to tradition, the Magisterium, or specific textual versions, rather than in the manuscript itself. The Sinaiticus is a source, not a denomination.

2.3. Leningrad Codex and Dead Sea Scrolls:

The Leningrad Codex (ca. 1008 CE) is the oldest surviving complete Hebrew Bible and the basis for **the** current standard **Masoretic Text (MT)**. The **Dead Sea Scrolls** (dated between 200 BC and 70 AD) are fragments thousands of years older and represent an earlier and more diverse textual stage.

Detailed Analysis of Differences:

1. Textual Differences between the Original Manuscripts:

A comparison between the Leningrad Codex (TM) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran) reveals both remarkable textual stability and significant variations:

- **Age and Type of Text:**

  - **Leningrad Codex (TM):** This is a "late" text in terms of dating, but it represents a careful and standardized recension of the Hebrew text carried out by the Masoretes (Jewish scholars) between the 6th and 10th centuries CE. It includes vocalization marks and accents.

  - **Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran):** These are up to a thousand years older. Crucially, they show that in ancient times there was no single "uniform" Hebrew biblical text; several textual traditions coexisted.

About 60% of the scrolls are very close to the proto-Masoretic type of text, but others reflect "pre-Septuagint" or "proto-Samaritan" texts.

- **Textual Variants (Examples):**

  - **Spelling:** Most differences are minor, such as spelling changes or the use of *plene* (complete) or *defective* (defective) vowels.
  - **Length and Content:** In some books, such as **Jeremiah** or **Samuel**, the Qumran scrolls contain sections that are longer or shorter than in the Leningrad Codex. For example, in 1 Samuel, a Qumran scroll.

It is often closer to the Greek version of the Septuagint than to the MT, suggesting that the Septuagint was based on an older Hebrew text that differed from the one standardized in the MT.

- **The Great Isaiah Scroll:**

This scroll is 95% identical to the MT of Isaiah, but contains some 2,600 variants, mostly minor, demonstrating incredible consistency in the transmission of the text over a millennium.

2. Discrepancies with Ecclesiastical Interpretations:

The differences with ecclesiastical interpretations do not arise from these minor textual variations, but from the way different religious traditions approach theology and practice:

- **Confirmation of Textual Stability:** The Qumran discovery gave churches great confidence that the Hebrew text had been transmitted with astonishing fidelity for 1,000 years. This reinforces the belief in divine providence in the preservation of the Scriptures.

- **Acceptance of Textual Criticism:**

    - **Modern Scholarship/Moderate Denominations:** They use evidence from both manuscripts (Leningrad and Qumran) to produce more accurate modern translations, sometimes adjusting the text to reflect an older reading from Qumran.

    - **Conservative/Fundamentalist Denominations:** Some ecclesiastical branches insist on the perfection and inerrancy of **the Masoretic Text** as represented in the Leningrad Codex, and may be more reluctant to accept the variant readings from Qumran.

Conclusions:

- **Evidence of Diversity:** The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated that there was greater textual diversity in pre-Christian Judaism than previously thought, challenging the ecclesiastical idea of a perfectly singular and unaltered line of textual transmission from Moses.

- **Solid Textual Basis:** The Leningrad Codex remains the basis for nearly all Old Testament translations, and Qumran has served to refine and confirm its overall accuracy.

- **Hermeneutics Dominates Discrepancy:** Doctrinal differences between churches arise from the **theological interpretation** of specific texts and the accepted **canon** (e.g., the use of the Septuagint by early Christianity versus the use of the MT by Protestantism), rather than from textual variations between the Leningrad Codex and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Ecclesiastical faith is based on the message, which remains constant across these different textual traditions.

Level 1: The Canon (Contents of the Books)

Ecclesiastical differences over which books belong in the Bible contrast with the diversity of ancient manuscripts.

Aspect	Original/Ancient Texts	Ecclesiastical Interpretations
Canon AT	There were multiple collections (proto-Masoretic, pre-Septuagint). The **Septuagint (LXX)** included additional (**deuterocanonical**) books.	**Catholic/Orthodox:** Accepts the deuterocanonical books as inspired. **Protestant:** Follows the Jewish canon (Masoretic Text, based on the Leningrad Codex) and excludes these books.
Canon NT	Ancient manuscripts such as the **Codex Sinaiticus** included books that are now extracanonical, such as the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*.	**All:** They have a closed and uniform canon of 27 books of the New Testament, excluding the additional texts that appeared in some ancient manuscripts.

Level 2: Textual Variants:

There are thousands of minor variations between the original manuscripts.

Appearance	Original/Ancient Texts	Ecclesiastical interpretation
Omissions/Additions	Key ancient manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus) **omit** long passages such as **Mark**	Modern Bibles often **include** these passages, but with footnotes indicating their absence in the manuscripts

	16:9–20 and **John 7:53–8:11**.	older and more reliable. Most variants are minor, not affecting central doctrines.
Spelling and Grammar	Common variations in spelling, word order, or vocalization (in Hebrew, as in the Leningrad Codex).	Modern translations unify these variants for clarity, relying on textual criticism (comparison of manuscripts) to determine the most likely reading.
Textual Stability	The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated remarkable textual stability over 1,000 years, but they also revealed different *types* of Hebrew text.	It reinforces confidence in the divine preservation of Scripture, although some fundamentalist denominations still prefer translation versions based on later manuscripts (e.g., *Textus Receptus* or the MT without critical amendments).

Level 3: Hermeneutics and Doctrinal Development:

This is the point of greatest divergence. Churches develop doctrines that go beyond the text.

Aspect	Ideas in the Original Texts	Ecclesiastical Ideas/Doctrines
Authority	Emphasis on the inherent authority of the apostolic and prophetic writings.	**Catholicism/Orthodoxy: Sacred Tradition** and the **Magisterium** (the Church's teaching authority) have equal authority to interpret the text. **Protestantism: Sola Scriptura** alone (the Bible is the only source of authority).
Nature of the Eucharist	Account of the Last Supper ("This is my body"). The text is narrative, without philosophical	**Catholicism: Transubstantiation** (literal change in the substance of bread and wine). **Protestantism:** Spiritual presence or mere symbolism/memorial.
Ecclesiastical Structure	Descriptions of bishops, deacons, and local elders. Primacy of Peter, but without a clear global papal structure.	**Catholicism:** The development of **the Papacy** and apostolic succession as divinely ordained universal authority. **Protestantism:** Various structures (congregational, Presbyterian) that reject papal authority.
Salvation	Texts emphasize both faith (Romans) and works (James).	**Protestantism: Justification by faith alone** (**sola fide**). Works are the result of salvation. **Catholicism:** Living faith with works of charity necessary for ongoing justification.

Second Conclusion:

The differences between the original texts and the ecclesiastical ones do not lie in a massive corruption of the text, but in how different religious traditions **interpret, canonize, and systematize** theology based on those texts. The original manuscripts show textual diversity that the churches eventually standardized, and on that textual basis, each denomination built its own systems of beliefs and practices, sometimes extending or reinterpreting concepts in ways that are not explicit in the ancient texts.

1.4 The P52, Chester Beatty, Bodmer, Alexandrian Codex (A) papyri, Refrain Rescript:

Analysis of the collection of ancient papyri and codices mentioned (P52, Chester Beatty, Bodmer, Alexandrinus, Ephraim Rescriptus) versus modern ecclesiastical interpretations underscores a crucial distinction: the manuscripts are the raw material, while ecclesiastical doctrines are the product of centuries of interpretation, canonical selection, and theological development that go far beyond textual variants.

<u>Comprehensive Analysis of Differences:</u>

1. The Original Manuscripts: Context and Content:

These manuscripts are key witnesses to the early transmission of the biblical text in Greek.

P52 (Rylands Papyrus): The oldest fragment of the New Testament (approx. 125-150 AD). It contains only a few lines from John 18, demonstrating the early circulation of the Gospel of John. Its tiny size does not allow for extensive theological conclusions, but it validates the antiquity of the text.

Chester Beatty Papyri (P45, P46, P47): From the third century AD. They contain significant portions of the Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles, and Revelation. They show a form of text close to the Alexandrian textual type (generally considered closest to the lost "original"). P46 is almost complete with Paul's letters.

Bodmer Papyri (P66, P72, P75): From the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. P66 contains much of John and is vital for textual criticism; P75 contains portions of Luke and John. They are famous for their high quality and omission of disputed passages, such as the story of the adulterous woman.

Alexandrian Codex (A): Complete manuscript on parchment from the 5th century AD. One of the "Four Great Uncial Codices." It contains most of the Greek Bible and some additional books (such as 1 and 2 Clement) that modern Bibles no longer consider canonical.

Ephraim Rescript (Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, C): A palimpsest from the 5th century AD, meaning that the original biblical text was erased (scraped off) in the 12th century to write sermons, but it is still legible. It contains fragments from almost the entire Bible.

2. Discrepancies between Manuscripts and Ecclesiastical Ideas:

The discrepancies do not stem from churches "hiding" manuscripts, but rather from how different traditions have dealt with textual criticism and doctrinal development.

Biblical Canon:

Original/Manuscripts: They show a fluid or developing canon in the early centuries. Codices such as the Alexandrian include additional books that not all churches accept today.

Ecclesiastical: Churches established closed and fixed canons (e.g., 66 books for Protestants, more for Catholics and Orthodox), excluding texts that were found in ancient manuscripts but did not meet the criteria of inspiration or apostolicity.

Textual Variants and Authenticity:

Original/Manuscripts: The oldest papyrus manuscripts (P52, Bodmer, Chester Beatty) omit passages that later churches added or that are found in later Byzantine manuscripts (e.g., Mark 16:9-20, the story of the adulterous woman in John 7:53-8:11).

Ecclesiastical: Modern scholarship largely accepts that these passages are later additions and are not part of the oldest "original" text, which is reflected in the footnotes of current Bibles. However, some more conservative denominations, which rely on the Textus Receptus (a 16th-century AD text based on later manuscripts that include these passages), still consider them authentic.

Hermeneutics and Theology:

Original/Manuscripts: The texts provide the basis of faith.

Ecclesiastical: They develop complex doctrines, sacraments, and hierarchical structures (e.g., the papacy, transubstantiation) that are the result of centuries of theological interpretation and systematization. These interpretations are uniform within a denomination but differ dramatically between denominations, despite using the same base manuscripts.

Conclusions:

Textual Validation: These papyri and codices confirm the antiquity and remarkably stable transmission of the New Testament text over the centuries.

Fluidity of the Canon: They show that the biblical canon was not instantaneous, but evolved and was standardized by the Church over several centuries.

Interpretation is the Discrepancy: The main discrepancy is not in the texts themselves, but in how different churches (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) interpret minor variants, determine canonicity, and develop doctrines that are often not explicit in the oldest manuscripts, but are later theological developments.

FINAL CONCLUSION:

Unveiling the Original Truth Beyond Dogma:

The search for the "original truth" through analysis of the oldest biblical manuscripts (Rylands Papyri, Chester Beatty, Bodmer, Codex Sinaiticus, Leningrad Codex, Dead Sea Scrolls) reveals a more complex and dynamic textual landscape than traditional ecclesiastical narratives suggest. The original texts, predating any formalized dogma, offer a window into faith in its formative state.

The Emerging Image of the "Original":

The "original" we have analyzed is not a singular, unalterable text, perfectly preserved since its initial writing. Rather, it is a set of textual traditions that coexisted:

Textual Diversity: Manuscripts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint demonstrate that multiple versions of the Hebrew Old Testament circulated simultaneously. The idea of a single, pure Hebrew text prior to the Leningrad Codex (TM) is a historical simplification.

Fluid Canon: Ancient codices (Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus) included books that are now considered apocryphal or deuterocanonical by some ecclesiastical traditions. The canon was a process of selection and consolidation by the early church, not a static list from the beginning.

Minor Variants, Major Theological Impact Potential: Thousands of textual variants exist. While most are trivial, some notable omissions in the oldest manuscripts (such as the final sections of Mark and the story of the adulterous woman) challenge the notion of a 100% inerrant and perfectly transmitted text.

Discrepancies: The Gap Between Text and Dogma:

The gap between the original text and ecclesiastical interpretations is not a conspiracy, but rather the process of institutionalizing faith:

From Narrative to Systematized Doctrine: The original texts are often narrative, poetic, or epistolary, rich in nuance and even ambiguity. Over the centuries, churches felt the need to systematize these narratives into rigid dogmas (e.g., transubstantiation, papal infallibility, sola fide). These doctrines are interpretations of the text, not the text itself.

The Authority of Tradition: The fundamental divergence lies in the source of authority.

Protestantism seeks Sola Scriptura, but often follows specific interpretive traditions. Catholicism and Orthodoxy elevate Ecclesiastical Tradition and Magisterium to the same level as Scripture. In contrast, the original texts simply exist, without an accompanying dogmatic instruction manual that validates a single sectarian interpretation.

The Ecclesiastical Filter: Each denomination has placed a hermeneutical "filter" on the text. The search for the original truth involves removing that filter and facing the complexity, diversity, and sometimes harshness of the texts as they were written and circulated in ancient times.

Reflection: A More Honest Truth.

The original truth, as found in the manuscripts, is that the Bible is a complex human and divine document, with a diverse but miraculously robust history of transmission.

The search for this original truth does not destroy faith; it purifies it. It invites a relationship with the text that values intellectual honesty, textual criticism, and hermeneutical humility over blind adherence to dogmas developed centuries after the papyri and codices were written. The text is greater than any church; it is the inexhaustible source from which all traditions drink, but which none can possess or exhaust completely.

Dedicated with all my heart to:

To my Heavenly Father, for His unconditional love and for allowing me to seek His truth and giving me the opportunity to write this book; all glory and honor be to Him through His only Son, Jesus Christ.

To my beloved children, Naryra Melissa Alarcón Peña and Alex Eduardo Alarcón Peña, my driving force and my greatest blessing. With all my heart.

“ Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια and ἡ ζωή (Egó eimí he hodós kai he alétheia kai he zoé)”. John 14: 6.